Caught and Crushed by Pinch Points



What’s at Stake?

Caught and between. These two mild words describe a type of injury which is anything but mild.

Instead, they refer to being caught between two moving objects or a moving object and a stationary object. The result is compression and crushing injuries which can be fatal.

The places where these incidents occur are called “pinch points.”

What’s the Danger?

1. Getting caught in a pinch point can cause death, a disabling injury such as a hand mangled beyond repair, or permanent head trauma.
2. If your hand, gloves, clothes, hair, or jewelry gets caught in moving machinery, your entire body can be pulled into and through the machinery. If you survive it’s quite possible you could be stuck in the machinery for hours while rescuers attempt to free you.
3. You can also suffer fatal crushing injuries if you are caught between a moving object and a stationary object.
4. Caught-between injuries can occur in any kind of workplace but are particularly prevalent in manufacturing where machines are used to move, press, stamp and cut materials.
5. Construction sites where heavy equipment is operated are also a common place for crushing injuries.
6. Materials-moving work has its share of pinch point injuries too, such as when a worker’s hand is caught in an overhead sling or crushed by the heavy object she is setting down.
7. In mechanical repair, workers have been crushed by vehicles traveling across the shop floor or falling off jacks.

How to Protect Yourself

Here are five easy ways to protect yourself.

1. Ensure all machine guards are in place to prevent contact with moving parts such as gears and rollers.
2. Don’t wear loose clothing or jewelry around moving equipment because these can catch on the rotating machine parts and pull you in.

3. Carefully follow lockout procedures so equipment cannot be started accidentally when you are doing adjustments or maintenance. Always test the equipment once it’s locked out to ensure your lockout has worked.
4. Never assume a forklift, heavy equipment, or any other equipment operator can see you. Stay out of the way of moving equipment and be alert and aware of backup alarms, horns, and other warning signals.
5. Make sure cargo being loaded, unloaded, and transported and vehicles or heavy equipment raised up for repair or maintenance are safely blocked and chocked. If you’re driving a vehicle or equipment watch out for pedestrians, set your brake/s and chock the wheels when parked.

Final Word

Caught-between hazards come in many different forms. Some are traps which can crush a finger, hand, toes or feet. Others can cause fatal compression injuries to the head or chest. Stay alert to these hazards.